# The Job Search

# Introduction

In most aspects of life, modesty is an important quality to possess. But it has no place in your job search. Chances are, your dream job will have many qualified applicants. If you want to convince the prospective employer that you are the best fit for the position, you must learn to market yourself. Don't downplay your accomplishments. Advertise them.

As the first step in marketing your talents, you should decide exactly what your qualifications are. You need a detailed inventory of your background and experience so that you will know exactly what assets you have to offer an employer.

No matter what type of job you seek, your inventory will be a basic tool in your search. It will contain the information you need to prepare your résumé. It will help you decide how to present your qualifications at a job interview, and be a source for facts, dates and other information you will need to give an employer.

To prepare your inventory chart, follow the outline on the next page. On a separate sheet of paper, list all the data you think might help you in your job search. Later, you can sort the list and select only the assets relevant to the job you seek.

# 1. Work History:

List all of your jobs, including part-time, summer, freelance work, internships, and volunteer activities. For each job, give the name and address of your employer, your job title, the details of your duties, and the dates you were employed.

# Then ask yourself:

- What did I like about each job? Why?
- What did I dislike about each job? Why?
- Why did I leave?

# 2. Skills and Abilities:

Ask yourself:

• What personal qualities do I have that make me excel at certain types of work?

- Are your strong points initiative, imagination, leadership, ability to organize, willingness to follow orders, interest in detail, or ability to work with people?
- What did I learn on the job that I could use in another position? (For example, operation of a machine or office equipment or blueprint reading.)

# 3. Education List:

List the schools you attended, principal courses you took, and the degrees you received. It is not necessary to list graduation dates. Any business, vocational, military, on-the-job training, or continuing education courses, the dates, and any certificates you received.

Then ask yourself:

- What courses or training did I like best and why?
- What courses or training did I dislike and why?
- Now list your scholarships or honors and your extracurricular activities.

# 4. Interests, Talents, and Aptitudes:

Ask yourself:

- What are my hobbies or volunteer activities?
- What are my special talents or aptitudes? For example, can I fix a car? Play a musical instrument? Speak another language besides English? Am I good at drawing or painting? What do I learn most easily?
- How can I relate my talents and interests to a job?

If you are a recent graduate, your activities may be a significant part of your job qualifications (for example, work on the school newspaper or campus radio station). Even if they are not directly related to a job, they may help you decide where your talents and interests lie. (For example, do you enjoy sports, recreation and outdoor activities? Did you excel on the debate team? Are you good at organizing a group to do a job?)



# **Career Exploration and Planning**

# 5. Career Goals

Ask yourself:

- What kind of work do I want to be doing five or 10 years from now?
- What sort of job should I seek now to prepare for my goal?

# 6. Jobs for Me

Considering all the information in your inventory, list the types of jobs you feel you are best qualified for and want. List them in order of your preference.

You need to learn more about different types of jobs. A good place to go are your local Iowa Workforce Development Centers. The centers have information on a large variety of jobs in Iowa and the qualifications needed to get them. In the centers' resource rooms, you can also go online and research careers in the Iowa Workforce Information Network (IWIN) at: (http://iwin.iowaworkforce.org) or in the Occupational Outlook Handbook, published by the U.S. Department of Labor (www.bls. gov). The handbook has the latest information about several hundred occupations nationally. It discusses earnings and working conditions and assesses future job opportunities for people in the field.



Another good source of information are your local school or public library. Iowa Public Television (IPTV) has a library of career videos that can be used to explore career opportunities. Currently the career videos can be accessed by contacting IPTV but in the near future, IPTV will host the videos on their website at www.iptv.org.

Iowa Workforce Development Center has many self-service tools that can assist you in preparing your résumé, training on how to find and keep a job, and testing services to help you identify your skills, interests, abilities and training needs. The centers help match your skills and interests to the right job.

# Preparing a Résumé

An effective résumé "gets your foot in the door." It often leads to personal interviews you might not otherwise have. Your inventory chart should contain all the information you need to prepare your résumé. You now have to select, arrange, and organize this raw material in the way that best relates your background to the job you seek.

You can organize your experience in one of two ways - chronologically or by function. A chronological resume lists work experience in reverse chronological order, listing your most recent experience first. This is the most popular type of resume, and employers are most familiar with this style. Functional resumes summarize and stress skills and abilities, rather than your work history. This type of resume is good if you have little work experience, do not have a steady work history or want to change careers. You may want to review the suggested outline and sample résumés before you decide which one presents your work experience better.

For help in creating an outstanding résumé, visit your local Iowa Workforce Development Center. Many Iowa Workforce Development Centers throughout the state have a resource room containing computer software to help





you prepare your résumé. These tools include software that give you templates, tips to create résumés, cover letters and thank you letters. PCs are available to use with word processing software.

# **Résumé Writing Tips**

- State a specific career objective.
- List your achievements. They are more impressive than vague qualities like "good work ethic."
- Keep it brief and to the point. One page of well-organized career highlights looks better than three pages of unnecessary details.
- Appearance is important. Make sure you resume looks good by not crowding the page

with long paragraphs. Print it on high-quality resume paper, and proof-read it several times to make sure it is perfect.

- Try not to use expressions such as "responsible for" or "duties included." Instead use action verbs such as "assisted customers," and "repaired engines."
- Be honest and don't exaggerate your qualifications. Employers check your references, and you can lose your job if you are hired based on false statements.

The following examples show some of the ways a job seeker can organize a résumé. They are for use only as general guides. It is suggested that references be listed on a separate page.

# Sample Chronological Résumé

487 Franklin Drive Anytown, IA 55555

## EMPLOYMENT OBJECTIVE

Children's librarian

## EDUCATION

Hunter College, B.S., Major: elementary education; minor: child psychology. Columbia University, M.A., library science.

## EXPERIENCE

1999-2000 Woodland Elementary School, 231 Ritchie Lane, Woodland, NY.

- Taught fifth grade.
- · Stimulated pupils to do more independent reading.
- Prepared displays and organized field trips to nearby libraries in connection with annual book fair.
- Assisted part-time librarian in reorganizing instructional materials center to make it easier to use and more inviting in appearance.
- Took training course and for two years, conducted a junior great books course for pupils at Woodland.

1997-1998 (part-time during school year and full-time during summer of 1998). Library clerk, Bowen Library, 441 Playford Street, New York, NY.

- Located books for patrons and answered nonprofessional inquiries.
- · Received, sorted, repaired and shelved books.

Summer 1997. Clerk-typist, Mobile Manufacturing Company, 24 W. Fifth Street, Woodland, NY. Acted as secretary to vice president while regular secretary was on vacation.

Summers 1995 and 1996. Camp Counselor, Highpoint Camp, Wilson Road, Adirondacks, NY.

- · Taught arts and crafts.
- Supervised bunk of 10- and 11-year-old girls.

Spanish, good reading, writing and speaking knowledge. Operate various types of audio-visual equipment.

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## REFERENCES

Dr. Margaret Martin, Professor of Library Science, Columbia University, New York, NY 10027,(555) 555-5555.

Mr. Wilbur Miller, Principal, Woodland Elementary School, 231 Ritchie Lane, Woodland, NY10123, (555) 555-5555.

Mr. Walter Snyder, Chief Librarian, Bowen Library, 441 Playford Street, New York, NY 10009, (555) 555-5555.

# Sample Functional or Skills Résumé

656 W. 33rd Street Anytown, IA 55555

### Position Desired

Grocery store customer service clerk

Jefferson High School, Anytown, Iowa - Graduated with honors

# Grocery Checker

Green's Grocery, 504 W. Main, Anytown, Iowa May 2000 - present

- Scanning customers' groceries
- Make price entries manually and enter vendor and store coupons.
- Assist customers in finding items and prices.
  Stock shelves, some light cleaning and other duties as assigned.
- · Use cash register, scanner, adding machine and pricing gun

Bays Video Store, 600 E. Walnut, Anytown, Iowa August 1999 - May 2000

- Worked part-time after school in the video store
- Assisted customers in selecting and renting videotapes and
- · Used the computer for membership entry and retrieval. Rang up each sale, close the store and make the deposit.
- Left me in charge when owner was out of the store.

Babysitter/Nanny Dr. and Mrs. B. White, 3256 N. Lincoln Drive, Anytown, Iowa Summers 1998 and 1999

- \* Cared for three small children each day including preparing meals and planning activities
- Cleaned the house
- \* Did the laundry
- \* Overall operations of the house.

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## References

Mrs. Alice Schwarz, Principal, Jefferson High School, Anytown, Iowa, (515) 555-5793.

Mr. George Hartwell, Salesperson, Tone's Spices, Anytown, Iowa, (515) 555-4924.

Mr. Lyle Olson, Owner, Olson's Electric, Anytown, Iowa, (515) 555-6441.





# **Career Exploration and Planning**

# **Cover Letters**

A cover letter is a letter of introduction and expression of interest that you send to a prospective employer, along with your resume. Cover letters are, in some ways, more important than resumes. While resumes summarize your qualifications, cover letters should sell you to the employer. You want the letter to convince the employer to take action on your resume and invite you for an interview.

- The cover letter should be addressed to a specific person. If you don't know the person's name and title, call and ask.
- The cover letter should briefly explain why you are interested in the company and what you can contribute.
- A cover letter should not merely repeat the contents of the resume; it should highlight only the most important parts of your resume, and expand on them.
- The cover letter should be brief and to the point. It should not go over one page.
- Don't use jargon or be too technical.
- A cover letter has three sections: the introduction, middle, and ending. Normally each section is limited to one brief paragraph.
- The most important point to get across in the introduction (first paragraph) is your reason for writing. (See sample cover letter.)
- The middle (second paragraph) covers your main qualifications and accomplishments, and the reasons you are interested in the job.
- The ending (last paragraph) is a request for an interview. One option is to restate your interest in the job or call the following week to inquire about setting a an interview.
- It is always important to follow up your letter with a phone call to make sure they received your application packet and to ask about the hiring process.

March 29, 2007

Mr. Kenneth D. Wilson Personnel Manager Kwick Litho Service, Inc. 1405 Bridge Street Anytown, IA 55555

Dear Mr. Wilson:

Yesterday, I talked with Mark Andersen, your representative at the Anytown job fair. From our conversation, I became very interested in applying for the offset press operator position. Kwick Litho Service, Inc. is a leader in the full-service printing operation and I am eager to offer my skills in graphic design and production.

Currently, I am enrolled in graphic production classes at Local Community College. My course work has included a full range of printing tasks including design, three-color offset and web press operation, and the use of pre-sensitized and direct-image plates. After completing these courses next month, I would like the opportunity to put my training into practice in a position such as the one that you have advertised.

Would it be possible to schedule a time when I might visit you? I would like to talk with you about my qualifications and my interest in working for Kwick Litho Service.

Sincerely yours,

(skip four spaces for your signature)

Daniel Heidelburg 304 Newbury Street Anytown, IA 55555 Phone: 555.555.5555



# The Job Interview

A job interview is your showcase for merchandising your talents. During the interview an employer judges your qualifications, appearance and general fitness for the job opening. It is your opportunity to convince the interviewer you can make a real contribution to the firm. To present your qualifications most advantageously, you will need to prepare in advance. You should have the needed papers ready and the necessary information about yourself firmly in mind, and you should know how to act at the interview to make it an effective device for selling your skills.

# Preparing for the Interview

- Assemble all the papers you need to take with you. If you have not prepared a résumé, take your school records, Social Security card, and work records, along with the names of your employers and dates of employment. (Prepare your own list if you have no formal records.) If your work is the type you can present at an interview, you may want to take a few samples (such as art or design work or published writing).
- Learn all you can about the company where you are going for an interview its product or service, standing in the industry, number and kinds of jobs available, hiring policies and practices. Most companies have Web sites with this information.
- Be prepared to furnish references. (include names, addresses, phone numbers, and business affiliations of three people (no relatives) who are familiar with your work and character). If you are a recent graduate, you can list your teachers. Ask your references for permission to use their names, and alert them to expect a call.
- Never take anyone with you to the interview.
- Arrive 10-15 minutes early. Allow as much uninterrupted time for the interview as it may require. (For example, do not park your car in a limited time space.)
- First impressions are important. Dress conservatively. Are your clothes clean and neat? Are they appropriate for the job? Do they fit, or are they too revealing? Are your shoes clean? Don't leave a lasting reminder of your visit on the employer's carpet. Do you need a haircut? Men are you clean shaven, or is your beard or moustache trimmed? Women is your makeup neatly applied? Are your teeth clean and your breath fresh? You never get a second chance

to make a first impression, so don't blow it by showing up at the employer's business in dirty clothes, bare feet and bright green hair.

# In the Interview

- Be pleasant and friendly, but businesslike.
- Let the employer control the interview. Your answers should be frank and brief, but complete without rambling. Avoid strongly opinionated statements.
- Stress your qualifications without exaggeration.
- If you have not sent your résumé in advance, present it or your work history, references, work samples, or other materials to support your statements when the employer requests them.
- In discussing your previous jobs and work situations, avoid criticizing former employers or fellow workers.
- Don't discuss your personal, domestic or financial problems.
- Don't be in a hurry to ask questions unless the employer invites them.
- Be prepared to state the salary range you want, but not until the employer has introduced the subject. Be realistic in discussing salary. If asked, it is also acceptable to answer with this question: "What is the starting wage range for this position?"
- If the employer does not definitely offer you a job or indicate when you will hear back, ask when you may call to learn of the decision.
- If the employer asks you to call or return for another interview, make a written note of the time, date and place.
- Thank the employer for the interview.



# Iowa Career Resource Guide

# **Career Exploration and Planning**

# **Resources for Students and Parents**

Topics		
Apprenticeships		
Assessments, Career		
Exploration		
Career Planning		
Cost of Living		
Education Needed		
Financial Aid		
Interviewing, Resume		
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Job Corps		
Job Search Military		
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Study Skills		
Teen Workers	,	



# **Acknowledgments**

This guide is the result of collaboration between the Iowa Department of Education and the Iowa Workforce Development.

Text Editors: Teresa Taylor-Wolf, Linda Berg, Donna Burkett, Jeremy Varner

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Labor Market Trends & Information: Donna Burkett, Teresa Taylor-Wolf

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Other Contributors to the Guide:

Iowa Public Television

Iowa Department of Transportation Iowa College Student Aid Commission National Association for State Directors of Career Technical Education,

Career Clusters Project

The national employment outlook information was modified and reprinted with permission from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2006-07 Edition, Bulletin 2600. Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 2006.

Special thank you to Shaunda Hildebrand, Director and Rob Marvin, Editor for the Montana Career Resource Network of the Montana Dept. of Labor & Industry's Research & Analysis Bureau for providing the Montana Career Guide template to assist in the development of the Iowa Resource Career Guide.





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